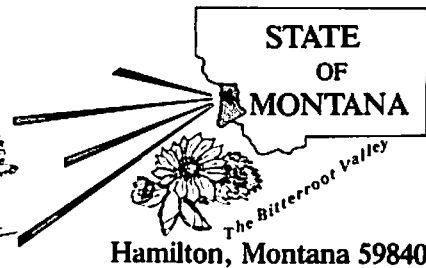
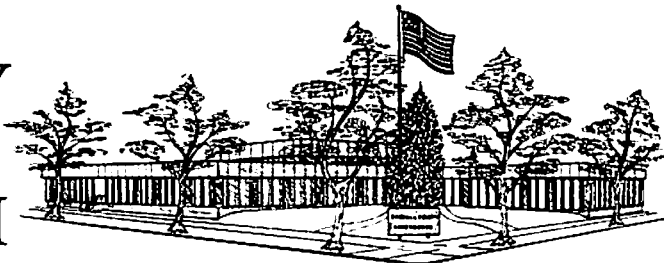


# COUNTY OF RAVALLI



Ravalli County Commissioners  
215 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite A  
Hamilton, MT. 59840  
406-375-6500

March 26, 2008

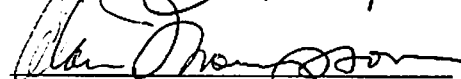
To Whom It May Concern:

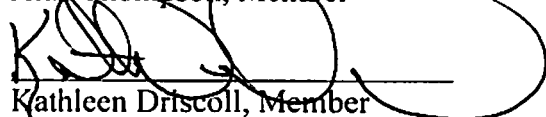
This letter is to affirm the Ravalli County Commissioner's commitment and provision of matching funds for the propose of Rural Business Opportunity Grant and Big Sky Trust Funds to BitterRoot Economic Development District, Inc (BREDD) for a Communication Engineering Assessment. Ravalli County will provide a \$1,000.00 of match, a Commissioner for the Assessment Team, and access to information regarding the county's communication infrastructure.

Ravalli County is committed to supporting BREDD in its efforts to implement a communication engineering assessment. This project will deliver a report that assesses existing communication infrastructure, community needs, and provide recommended actions to improve underserved areas in the region.

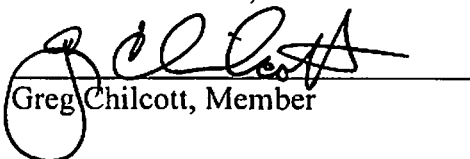
Sincerely,  
BOARD OF RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

  
Carlotta Grandsstaff, Chairman

  
Alan Thompson, Member

  
Kathleen Driscoll, Member

  
James E. Rokosch, Member

  
Greg Chilcott, Member

### **Proposed Communication Engineering Assessment:**

BitterRoot Economic Development District Inc (BREDD) is embarking in an effort to implement a Communication Engineering Assessment for the three county region (Mineral, Ravalli, and Missoula). The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the district identified under the Infrastructure Section an objective to improve communication infrastructure: *Develop the region's capacity to continually expand telecommunication infrastructure in order to enhance the capability of the region's businesses to compete in today's global economy.*

To take action on this objective, BREDD is looking at the interest and needs throughout the region to perform a Communication Engineering Assessment. Communication infrastructure for this project includes telephone, cell, radio, and broadband services. This study would include existing infrastructure inventory, community needs assessment, available technologies, and recommended actions to improve communication infrastructure in underserved areas. The need for this can be argued from many angles, health, emergency services, education, and of course economic development. BREDD is not promoting one over the other, but believes that they are all tied together supporting overall community health and quality of life. If the region's local government entities express interest in participating in this project BREDD would then obtain funding.

Once funds are secured BREDD would work with its partners to develop an RFP to hire an engineering firm to perform the work. This study would provide communities with the foundation to pursue funding for recommended projects. These projects could be pursued in partnership with BREDD or individually. The results of the study would be available to those that participated. A small monetary contribution and staff resources would be required of partnering counties and local governments.

## **Executive Directors Report**

**February 26<sup>th</sup> 2007:**

I have been at the job for over a year now and am wondering how the time has past so quickly. Now that the CEDS is done its time to get our hands dirty and work on some project throughout the region. Each project below fulfills some part of the CEDS for the region! Two of the project will provide the foundation for further economic development to be performed at the county or local levels truly fulfilling BREDD's mission and purpose.

### **CEDS:**

The EDA has approved our CEDS! We will be making copies and distributing these to elected official throughout the three counties. Please let me know if you would like to have a copy delivered to any group or individual in your area (geographic or industry)

### **Stimson:**

Missoula County, Stimson Lumber Company, BitterRoot Economic Development District, Inc (BREDD), and Missoula Area Economic Development Corporation (MAEDC) have mutually decided that pursuing EDA funding for a strategy and analysis of the former Stimson's plywood mill site would not be the best use of public resources. This is based primarily on the conflict between the county's timeline to secure funding and implement the project and the private sector needs to react to potential buyers. Resources would be available for future public funding assistance at the project site, for example workforce or infrastructure needs. If public assistance is needed in the future their will be opportunity for public input at that time.

Stimson will continue to work with Missoula Area Economic Development Corporation (MAEDC) to market the site. If MAEDC has an interested company their policy is to work with MAEDC board, elected officials, and other organizations (ie community councils) to ascertain community support.

### **Mineral County Challenge:**

BREDD assisted Mineral County in applying for EDA Short Term Planning funding for the proposed Mineral County Challenge. We submitted a preapplication with EDA in January.

Mineral County Challenge proposes to establish a framework for Mineral County communities to work collaboratively with natural resource managers to integrate county economic development strategies with resource management policies, plans and actions.

Project outcomes include identification of:

- 1) Specific economic opportunities
- 2) Associated state and federal resource management actions necessary to support the those opportunities
- 3) Community infrastructure, marketing, and financial capacity to exploit those opportunities
- 4) Alternative sources of resources required to develop the opportunities.

EDA will respond with in two months.

#### **Communication Engineering Assessment:**

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If you know of groups that would be interested in partnering on the project please tell them to contact our offices 258-3435.

#### **Urban and Rural Landscape Series:**

BREDD will be hosting the first advisory group meeting March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 that will develop a list of speaker and topics. This region of Western Montana is experiencing growth and a changing economy. With these changes comes, both challenges and opportunities. In order to address these opportunities and challenges we would like to start a Regional Urban and Rural Landscape Series.

The goals of this series would be to:

- 1) educate one another,
- 2) facilitate conversation around regional issues,
- 3) share tools and ideas,
- 4) create a level playing field, and
- 5) create an environment where its possible to be proactive and positive in the management of our natural and built environments.
- 6) build relationships and partnerships

#### **Audience:**

Elected Official, State, Local, and Federal, Land Use Managers, Private Citizens, Developers, Realtors, Conservations, Business's, Young and Aging etc.

This will be a series of presentation on various Land Use topics that will take place throughout the three counties. The purpose of the series is to facilitate education and open dialog around land use topics pertinent to our region.

**Missoula Better Building Center:**

BREDD is assisting a nonprofit organization in town with a pre application for EDA Public Works funding. The proposed project, Missoula Better Building Center (proposed name), will be a new retail, office and community education / services facility, housing Home Resource as the Anchor Tenant as well as other businesses and non-profits operating in the field of “sustainable living.” The project hopes to capitalize on the theories behind cluster development. Economic Development Administration defines industry clusters as:

Industry clusters are geographic concentrations of competing, complementary, or interdependent firms and industries that do business with each other and/or have common needs for talent, technology, and infrastructure. The firms included in the cluster may be both competitive and cooperative. They may compete directly with some members of the cluster, purchase inputs from other cluster members, and rely on the services of other cluster firms in the operation of their business.

The project is innovative in that they are trying to use New Market Tax Credits and EDA Grants. An EDA funding will be used for the construction portion of the project. Montana Community Development Corporation, Senator Baucus’s Office, MRA, and Rocky Mtn Development Group have all been involved in the project.

**Regional Economic Development Activities:**

***BEAR:***

The website for BEAR is in the final stages of approval and will soon be available for all three counties online. BEAR (Business Expansion And Retention) is a simple, three step community outreach program facilitated by local service providers designed to bring resources to existing businesses. The BEAR project is available in Missoula, Ravalli and

Mineral Counties. Each county has its own unique Resource Advisory Team manned by local service providers and specific to its area.

***Regional Economic Development Organizations Meetings:***

Economic Developer from the 7 counties in western Montana have expressed a need to meet on a regular, we held our first meeting in December and have another scheduled for March 6<sup>th</sup>. The meetings will focus on specific regional issues and also be a place for us to share projects and ideas. The March meeting will focus on a RLF Brownfields. Another meeting this spring will be held at Lubrecht, to discuss economic development organizations role in the timber industry.

**Politics and Policy:**

**Treasure Community Program:** Similar to the CRDC but at a local municipality level. Looking into the potential impact for this area.

**Federal Funding(Update from Senator Baucus's Office):**

EDA: Will not be reauthorized this FFY, a likely extension will be granted. Funding for this year has been GREATLY reduced.

FFY07 EDA 249 million

FFY08 EDA 100 million

Hardest hit will be the Public Works program that funds any sort of infrastructure project that is not related to Economic Adjustments. It will reduced from 147 million to 7 million dollars. The average public works grant in FFY 05 was 1.3 million. The Global Warming Initiative will be reduced from 9 million to 2 million.

**USDA Rural Development:**

33 programs in the USDA RD program face 2.3 billion dollars worth of cuts resulting in reductions or termination.

Rural Coop: 4.4 million to 2.8 million

Value Added Ag: No Funding

**CDBG: 4.2 Billion to 2.9 Billion**

**Secure Rural Schools:** This will try to be funded by attaching it to a Supplemental War Bill this spring. People feel this is the best bet. Matt Jones will keep us updated.

**2006 SRC Revenues:**

**Missoula:** 751,803.32

**Mineral:** 764,890.38

**Ravalli:** 385,473.60